



Responding to a disclosure of child sexual abuse (CSA) by a person with a disability requires a trauma-informed, person-centered, and rights-based approach that prioritizes safety, agency, and emotional well-being.



Immediate Response: What to Say and Do

✓ Believe & Affirm

- "I believe you."
- "Thank you for telling me."
- "You are not alone, and this is not your fault."

✓ Ensure Safety

- Assess immediate risk and take steps to protect them from further harm.
- Follow policies and procedures while centering their needs.

✓ Respect Their Autonomy

- "Would you like me to help you find support?"
- "You can decide how much you want to share."

✓ Provide Next Steps Without Overpromising

- "There are people who can help you."
- "I will do what I can to support you."



For further resources or training, contact
Stepping Out Program at info@steppingout.org.au



Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Response

Here's a guide to responding appropriately:

1. Safety and Trust

- Ensure the person feels physically, emotionally, and psychologically safe.
- Use a calm, reassuring tone and affirm that they are believed and supported.
- Respect their privacy and confidentiality while following mandatory reporting laws.

2. Empowerment & Choice

- Allow the person to disclose at their own pace, without pressure.
- Offer choices in how they wish to proceed, reinforcing their sense of control.
- Adapt communication to their needs (e.g., visual supports, assistive technology, plain language).

3. Avoid Retraumatization

- Be mindful of body language and tone—avoid appearing judgmental or overly emotional.
- Do not ask probing or leading questions; let them share in their own words.
- Minimize the number of times they need to retell their story by coordinating with support services.

4. Recognizing Communication Needs

- Be aware that some individuals may have difficulty verbalizing their experiences due to cognitive, sensory, or speech differences.
- Use communication supports such as sign language, picture exchange systems, or trusted support persons if needed.
- Validate non-verbal disclosures (e.g., gestures, behaviors, or distress responses).

5. Cultural & Intersectional Awareness

- Consider how disability, gender, culture, and past trauma impact their experience and response.
- Avoid assumptions about their understanding of abuse or their capacity to consent.
- Work with culturally appropriate and disability-informed services where possible.